

Ontario



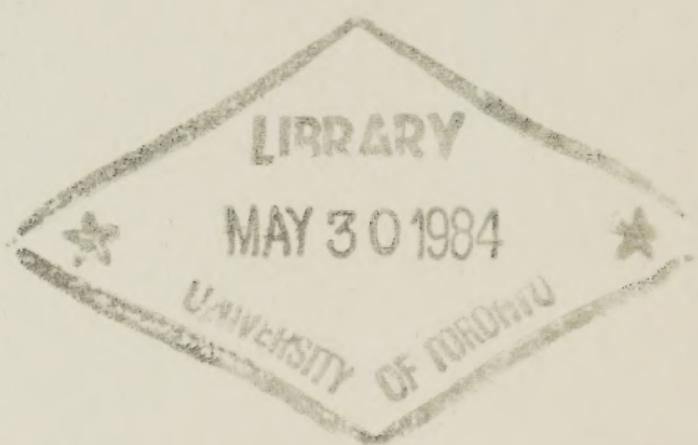
Ministry of
Community and
Social Services

Government
of Ontario

Programs and Services

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Introduction

The Ministry of Community and Social Services exists to help those in Ontario with special needs -children and adults who need assistance on either a temporary or a long-term basis.

That assistance is provided in a wide range of services. It may take the form of financial relief, physical care, or professional counselling, to cite just a few examples. This pamphlet is intended as a general guide to the Ministry's programs and services. More detailed information, in specific program areas, is available for those who require it. (See page 19).

Those we help

The services of this ministry, provided both directly and through funded agencies, can be grouped into two main categories: children and their families; and adults.

Services to children and/or their families include:

- group or foster homes;
- adoption or foster parents;
- help with physical, emotional or developmental disabilities;
- temporary or long-term help for children in need of protection; and
- probation and aftercare programs.

Services to adults include:

- senior citizens' centres, homes and community programs;
- job preparation for people with physical, emotional or developmental disabilities;
- benefits for those in financial need -either temporary or long term;
- group homes- e.g. for ex-offenders, alcoholics, or people emotionally or developmentally disabled; and
- residential and community programs for people with developmental disabilities.

Where to get help

To provide services at a local level, the province has been divided into four regions: northern, southwestern, southeastern and central. Within each region there are area offices which administer services and are able to assist in inquiries about funding, existing programs and services, and proposals for new programs.

The responsibilities for some programs are shared with private agencies or other levels of government. In any event, the area offices can help you either directly or by referral.

Family and Children's Services

The family is the best environment for most children to learn in and to grow into responsible and independent adults. Therefore a major thrust of ministry programs is to strengthen the family unit and help children develop in a healthy home atmosphere.

It is recognized, however, that some children need the protection or the specialized help available only from outside the home. Thus a variety of programs is provided.

Children's aid societies

Children's aid societies (CASs) -sometimes called family and children's services -have two key responsibilities. They assist children who are in need of protection and they support families in their child-raising responsibilities. The activities of the local children's aid society are preventive in nature. The society tries to deal with a family problem before it develops into a crisis.

Children's aid societies are non-profit corporations. The ministry supervises and provides major funding for them in partnership with local government. The services of the CAS in your community include:

- programs to prevent family breakups, including parent education and family counselling;
- protection of children from abuse and from situations of distress;
- guidance for mothers-to-be who are on their own;
- foster homes for children needing temporary or long-term placement; and
- adoption services—all aspects involved in helping a family arrange for and adjust to the adoption.

Your local children's aid society (or family and children's services) is listed in the phone book, under 'C' for Children.

Adoption

Would-be-adoptive parents should contact their local children's aid society to discuss adoption. A CAS worker will then talk to you or perhaps invite you to an orientation meeting with other interested couples. If you wish to proceed, a worker will be assigned.

Adoption aids

The ministry, using various adoption aids, assists in bringing together adoptable children and prospective parents. Today's Child, a syndicated column is distributed to newspapers across Ontario. Many of the children featured in the column are older or wish to be adopted with their brothers or sisters as a family. The television show, Family Finder, features adoptable children who come from children's aid societies all over Ontario.

The National Adoption Desk (NAD) in Ottawa is a resource for embassies and foreign countries seeking Canadian homes for their needy children.

Adoption Disclosure Registry

A registry was created in 1978 for those adoptees and natural parents of adoptees who may wish to contact each other or share information. If the natural parents, the adoptee and the adopting parent agree to the disclosure, information may be exchanged following counselling. Application forms are available through the local CAS or the Adoption Disclosure Registry of the ministry at Queen's Park.

Child abuse and neglect

What the law says:

"Anyone who has information that a child is in need of protection must report this information to a children's aid society immediately. A children's aid society is legally required to investigate and must take appropriate action to protect the child."

Prevention

Public education is an important part of child abuse prevention. The ministry has produced a number of pamphlets and booklets for public use, plus guidelines and research reports for professional use.

The ministry funds a variety of demonstration projects and programs aimed at preventing child abuse. In addition, a central child abuse register has been set up to record the names of all children who have suffered abuse and people who have inflicted or permitted abuse. This information is then available to children's aid societies throughout the province as a means of "tracking" the child, and thereby assisting the CAS in its attempt to prevent repetition of incidents of child abuse in the family.

Young people in trouble with the law

The ministry supervises a number of programs and facilities for young people in trouble with the law. For instance, a young offender placed on probation is supervised by a probation and aftercare officer. The young offender may continue to live at home, or be placed in a foster or group home funded by the ministry. The ministry operates a small number of training schools for young offenders who need a structured setting. There are also a number of centres for assessing offenders.

Children requiring residential care

The ministry funds and supervises homes for children and youths unable to live with their families or on their own. Temporary accommodation is sometimes necessary during a family crisis such as illness, separation or loss of housing. Long-term needs are filled by a variety of group and foster homes and institutional care.

Foster parenting

There's a continuing need for foster parents to take care of boys and girls on both a short- and a long-term basis. Youngsters need foster care for a variety of reasons -emotional or behavioural problems, because they have been in trouble with the law, or they cannot live at home in safety.

Contact your local children's aid society for additional information.

Children requiring emotional care

Children with behavioural or psychological problems may receive care and treatment at children's mental health centres located throughout the province. These centres provide services for emotionally disturbed children, youths and their families, with a view to returning them home as contributing members of society.

The ministry is attempting to ensure that each child with emotional problems has reasonable access to a range of mental health services. The ministry supervises these centres and provides operating funds.

Day nurseries

The ministry ensures that all daycare centres and nurseries meet accepted standards of child care, educational stimulation, fire safety, health, nutrition and child guidance. It licenses and supervises all group programs for normal children up to 10 years of age and for developmentally handicapped children, ages two to 18 years.

There are different types of daycare centres and nurseries within your community. People living in their own home can set up a private home daycare agency caring for not more than five children. Some private homes are "supervised" by the local municipality or an approved agency and some qualify for a fees subsidy from the municipality.

For more information on types of day care within your local community, call the nearest office of the ministry. If you think you might qualify for a fees subsidy because of your financial circumstances, contact the social services department of your municipality.

Disabled children at home

Families who care for severely disabled children in their own homes may qualify for a special monthly allowance. The Handicapped Children's Benefits program is designed to help defray the extraordinary costs related to the special assistance and treatment needed for the severely disabled child.

A severely disabled child is one who is unable to perform such basic life skills as walking, self-feeding, toileting, personal hygiene and communication.

For more information about this allowance, contact the nearest office of the ministry.

Developmentally handicapped children

Services to developmentally handicapped (also called mentally retarded) children are administered by the ministry, community agencies and facilities for the mentally retarded. Some facilities are owned and operated by the ministry; others are funded by the ministry and operated by local boards. Services in your community for retarded children may include:

- assessment and diagnostic facilities,
- family counselling,
- day nurseries,
- parent relief,
- nursing and medical care,
- behaviour modification programs,
- education,
- recreational and social activities,
- life-skills training,
- community outreach programs, and
- special programs for retarded children with additional disabilities such as hearing or sight loss.

Developmentally handicapped persons

There are many support services available to assist developmentally handicapped adults to live independently in the community. For others whose handicaps necessitate a more structured environment, there are a number of specialized facilities operated by the ministry or community agencies. Services to the developmentally handicapped in your community may include:

- accommodation in special residences and group homes,
- employment and training,
- adult protective services,
- communications (specialized communication skills),
- life-skills training,
- behaviour management,
- adult education programs,
- recreational and social activities, and
- financial assistance to meet special needs.

For more information about services for mentally retarded adults, consult the ministry area office nearest you or the nearest mental retardation facility.

Seniors

Aids for independence

Most senior citizens in Ontario live in their own homes or with relatives. The ministry helps local municipalities and non-profit organizations operate services for seniors such as meals-on-wheels, homemakers' and nurses' services and senior volunteers-in-service who help seniors remain at home. The booklet *Guide*

for Senior Citizens gives additional information. It is available through the:

Seniors Secretariat,
3rd floor,
700 Bay Street,
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 1Z6

Telephone: (416) 965-5106

The ministry also assists older people in applying for the various Ontario benefits to which they are entitled, such as the Ontario Senior Citizens' Privilege Card and the Drug Benefit program.

Elderly persons' centres

Elderly persons' centres offer social, recreational, and other activities to encourage seniors to remain active in the community. The ministry gives grants to municipalities and other non-profit organizations which operate these centres.

Homes for the aged

Subsidies are paid to charitable and municipal homes which offer residential or extended health care for seniors unable to remain in their own homes. Charges for accommodation, meals and services are levied, and a subsidy is provided if needed.

Facilities in homes for the aged usually include games and crafts rooms, gift and tuck shops, hair salons and chapels. Many newer homes offer private accommodation for married couples.

For specific information about services for senior citizens, contact the area office nearest you. For details about activities in your neighbourhood, check your local library or community information centre.

Rehabilitation for physically and socially disabled

Residential programs

Halfway houses for persons needing interim help to adjust to normal living are funded by the ministry and include half-way houses for alcoholics, ex-offenders, ex-psychiatric patients and adults with other social adjustment problems.

The ministry also funds attendant care services for physically disabled people who live in specially operated apartments and group homes.

Employment programs

Aid for disabled persons is provided with the goal of preparing for and obtaining employment. Employment may be sheltered, in the open labour market or at home.

Ministry involvement includes the provision of the following services under the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Act to individuals with a physical, emotional or intellectual disability which inhibits their ability to get a job:

- counselling services to support an individual through the rehabilitation process until suitable employment is found;
- assessment services to determine aptitudes and the kind of work that the disabled person is best suited for;
- restoration services and devices such as artificial limbs, braces or wheelchairs; and
- vocational training which may involve training at a community college, university, private or business school, workshop, or an on-the-job training program.

The ministry shares with municipal governments the cost of work-activity projects giving participants an opportunity for social and educational development within a working environment. Work-activity projects are aimed at removing personal, family and environmental barriers to employment.

For specific information about these services for disabled persons, contact the ministry area office nearest you.

Those in Financial Need – Temporary or Long-term

The ministry works closely with municipalities in providing financial assistance.

General Welfare Assistance

General Welfare Assistance is available at municipal social service offices to people in temporary financial need who are:

- unemployed and looking for work;
- supporting children alone;
- caring for foster children (under limited circumstances);
- sick;
- physically, mentally or emotionally disabled;
- elderly; or
- attending elementary or secondary school with no other means of support.

The amount of assistance depends on the recipient's income, expenses, family size and ages of the children. General Welfare Assistance provides money for basic living costs and other expenses such as special diet food if needed, and fuel. In addition, recipients and their dependents receive health insurance coverage and prescription drugs.

Supplementary Aid or Special Assistance may be provided through municipalities as:

- moving or necessary transportation (other than ambulance);
- comfort allowance for those in nursing homes;
- surgical supplies and prosthetic appliances;
- dental or optical services, including eyeglasses;
- vocational training; and
- funerals and burials.

Family Benefits Assistance (FBA)

This program, similar to municipal general welfare assistance, is provided to individuals and their families who need help on a long-term basis. To qualify, the recipient must usually be in need and be:

- a sole-support parent;
- a person who is blind, disabled or permanently unemployable;
- a foster parent (on behalf of the foster child in limited circumstances); or
- a single woman between 60 and 64 years old;
- an elderly person who is not in receipt of old-age security payments.

In some instances, parents of handicapped children are eligible.

Family benefits are paid monthly by cheque. The amount depends on incomes, expenses, family size and the age of the children. The program also covers health insurance, prescription drugs, eyeglasses and hearing aids. Families with dependent children are entitled to dental care for the children and emergency care for the parents, as well as back-to-school benefits.

Work Incentive Program

The Work Incentive Program is designed to encourage and to assist those recipients on Family Benefits to return to full-time employment. It is a voluntary program that provides allowances and health-related benefits, for up to two years, to FBA recipients who start full-time employment. For more information about the program, including eligibility criteria, contact the nearest office of the ministry.

Training allowance

Special provisions may be made for those with dependent children who are taking approved Canada Manpower job-training courses. They may be able to continue to receive a minimal allowance plus coverage for medical, dental and drug expenses. When entering full-time employment, such recipients may also be eligible for the phase-out allowance and Work Incentive Program.

Part-time employment

Because some recipients are only able to work part time, the Family Benefits program allows recipients to retain a portion of the earnings.

Temporary financial problems

The ministry also sponsors programs, usually through municipalities and/or private agencies, to help people get through periods of temporary financial distress. They include:

- financial eligibility assessment for those unable to pay fees for necessary legal services, which are provided through the province's Legal Aid program,
- credit/debt counselling, provided through private agencies, and
- subsidies for homemakers to enable those who are elderly, disabled, ill or convalescent to remain in their own homes and prevent serious family disruption, provided through municipalities, except in unorganized territories. Homemaker services are available on a daily or periodic basis, under the direction of a physician or visiting nurse.

How to find out more

There is free information which describes ministry services and programs. For more information, contact your area office or:

Communications Branch
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Rm M1-51, Macdonald Block
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1E9
Telephone: (416) 965-7825

To find the nearest office of the ministry see Community and Social Services in the Ontario Government Section of the blue pages of your telephone directory.

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For more information contact the nearest area office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The telephone number will be found in the Ontario government section of the blue pages in the back of your directory.

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